Novel Asks Millions In DA, Backers Suit

A suit which may total as much as $50 million in alleged damages was filed against Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison and members of Truth and Consequences today in Federal District Court.

The action was brought by a 29-year-old former New Orleans bar owner, Gordon Novel, whom Garrison has termed an important witness in the DA's Kennedy death plot investigation.

ACTING THROUGH attorneys here and in Columbus, Ohio, Novel brought the action against Garrison, Willard Robertson, Joseph Rault Jr., Cecil Shilstone and all members of the private organization which is funding the Garrison inquiry.

Robertson, Rault and Shilstone, all New Orleans business leaders, are the organizers and leaders of Truth and Consequences.

The Novel suit asks $10 million in damages from the DA and $1 million each from the three other defendants, Truth and Consequences and "John Does" which the action identifies as members of the organization.

Steven Plotkin of New Orleans and Jerry Weiner of Columbus, Ohio, signed the action filed with the U.S. District Court Clerk.

THE SUIT CHARGES the "various defendants" conspired to "use the office of the district attorney of Orleans Parish to charge various individuals with being involved" in a plot to kill Kennedy.

It charges that Garrison's statements and accusations against Novel have ruined his

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"reputation as a man of honesty, honor and probity."

Until the Garrison investigation began, the suit declared, Novel had never been "suspected of or charged with crimes of being a material witness; conspiring to commit simple burglary, theft of merchandise or being or in any way to have knowledge of a conspiracy to assassinate the late John F. Kennedy."

NOVEL IS FREE on $10,000 bond at Columbus where he was arrested April 1 on a warrant from Garrison's office charging him with conspiring to burglarize a munitions dump at Houma.

Since the original arrest, Terrebonne Parish authorities have charged Novel with burglarizing the bunker. The theft charges from Orleans Parish also have been lodged against him. Both grew out of alleged bad debts.

Novel's suit contends Garrison and members of Truth and Consequences conspired . . . "maliciously intending to injure the plaintiff."

It said Garrison's actions against Novel forced him to leave New Orleans and take sanctuary in another state. A jury trial was requested in the action.

THE SUIT WAS accompanied by a group of questions seeking the names of the members of Truth and Consequences, its charter position and how its funds are distributed and used.

Truth and Consequences was established shortly after the Garrison investigation became public when the DA complained that public recording of his office's expenditures was hampering the probe. It was organized by about 50 of the city's businessmen who agreed to contribute funds.

Judge James A. Comiskey ordered a hearing on the suit next Wednesday.